

92° with a chance of Halloween

Numismagram Newsletter #108 (X/2023)



It's that time of the year again! Our special Halloween upload of numismatic nightmares has descended as we celebrate 12 days until the spooktacular holiday. And while we would normally use this as an opportunity to post an image of some festive pumpkin carvings, the rather unseasonable weather has prevented such gourd creativity. In fact, it hit 92° in the latter portion of yesterday afternoon—a temperature that would have rendered even the fiercest jack-o'-lantern into a rotting piece of slop. Therefore, images of our leaf-filled pumpkin bags (*along with some homemade nondescript tombstones*) will have to do.

Up first in this chilling upload is something that would fit right in to any pirate-themed collection, as it certainly channels the Jolly Roger on its obverse...



This cast brass Begrafenisloodje (essentially, a funeral token) dated 1733 would have served as a way of tracking funerary expenses having been paid. A type that is not at all encountered very often (and much rarer and larger than the slightly earlier Liège mereaux), this exceptional example represents the finest of just three seen at PCGS (with this one clearly succeeding the others quite highly with respect to eye appeal).

Meanwhile, it wouldn't be spooky without some insects, so here is an even earlier token from Germany featuring not just a skull, but one with worms coming out through the eye sockets...



Housed in a PCGS AU-53 holder, it undoubtedly represents about the finest that I've ever encountered for the type, with iconography that seemingly burns itself into your eyes...or is that a worm...?

Switching over to skulls along with the remainder of their bony skeletal structure, here is a rather interesting medicinal-related specimen from mid-18th century Amsterdam...



These tokens, especially after engraving for their bearer, would allow a physician entry into the city's botanical gardens in order to procure herbs for medicines. On account of the plagues that gripped Europe, the idea of the cultivation and administration of medicines for curing or even warding off diseases and ailments became much more front of mind. In the case of this specimen, the bearer was a Dr. Willem Evers, presented unto him in 1766.

Moving to skeletons hanging from tree branches, which is likely something decorating at least a few trees in your neighborhood, we have our next cackling example...



Here, however, they are not skeletons gleefully hanging from trees, but rather lifeless bodies. This rare farthing token from the final decade of the 18th century touches upon an aspect fairly common from the period—that of bewilderment toward the idea of mankind's liberties and freedoms. Pro-monarchy factions within Great Britain minced no words when it came to sentiments toward Thomas Paine or even William Pitt "the Younger"—whose limp corpses hang from the gallows on the obverse and reverse. What makes this example even more interesting is that the designer opted for the use of puns rather than allowing either name to grace the numismatic canvas. Paine is cleverly referred to as "the end of pain," while Pitt is mentioned only with the letters P and T between an eye (meaning I, and thus, PIT or Pitt). Pretty clever, and extremely haunting.

Lastly, it wouldn't be Halloween, or a skulls and skeletons upload for that matter, without a Blumenbach "3 skulls" medal. Yet, this one is a bit different from those which we normally offer in that it is in silver...



While bronze is the most commonly encountered metal for the type, rarer ones exist in cast iron and silver. This example, though exhibiting a few issues, stands as just the third silver specimen of the type which we have had the chance to offer, and represents a very rare opportunity for the fans of this haunting and iconic type.

For all of this upload's spooky exonumia, including a couple "Dance of Death"-style large cast iron medals from World War I, a popular Liège méreau, a chilling and wondrously toned "you can't see me" religiously-charged satirical medal, and others, please click [here](#) or on the banner art below. We will be back again at the beginning of November for another great mix of art and historical medals.



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